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(54) Abstract Title
A font for serving alcoholic beverages

(57) A brass font 10 suitable for mounting on a bar top 28 and serving alcoholic beverages comprises two pieces 12, 14 which are coupled so as to define a cavity 26 through which beverage can be delivered to the tap(s) 16. Couplings 18, 20, 22, 24 between the two pieces are detachable, permitting access to the interior of the font for maintenance, etc. The pieces 12, 14 may be castings of metal, e.g. brass or chrome. Beverage is preferably conducted through the font 10 by way of tubing (not shown). Cooling tubing may also be included which extends through the font 10 up to the point at which the beverage conducting tubing is connected to the tap 16. The cavity 26 may be insulated with foam, and a flow controller may be positioned within the cavity. The font 10 may receive more than one tap (50, 52, 54, fig.4) mounted on a manifold. A clamp 30 for clamping the font 10 to the bar top 28 comprises at least two pieces 12, 14 and has a cavity through which beverages can be delivered to the font 10.

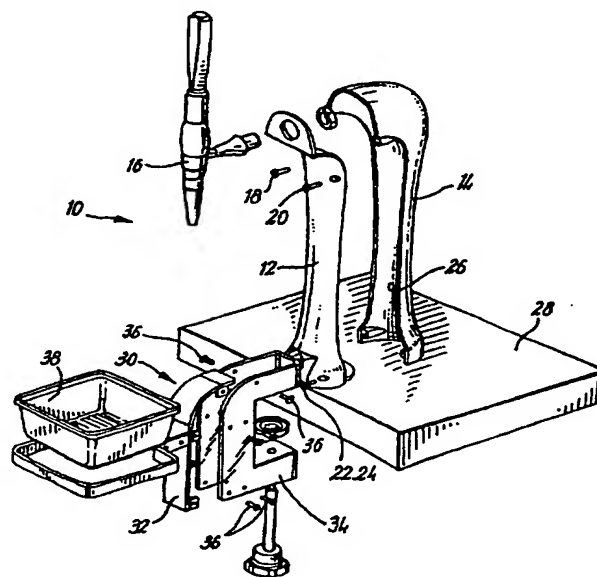


FIG. 1

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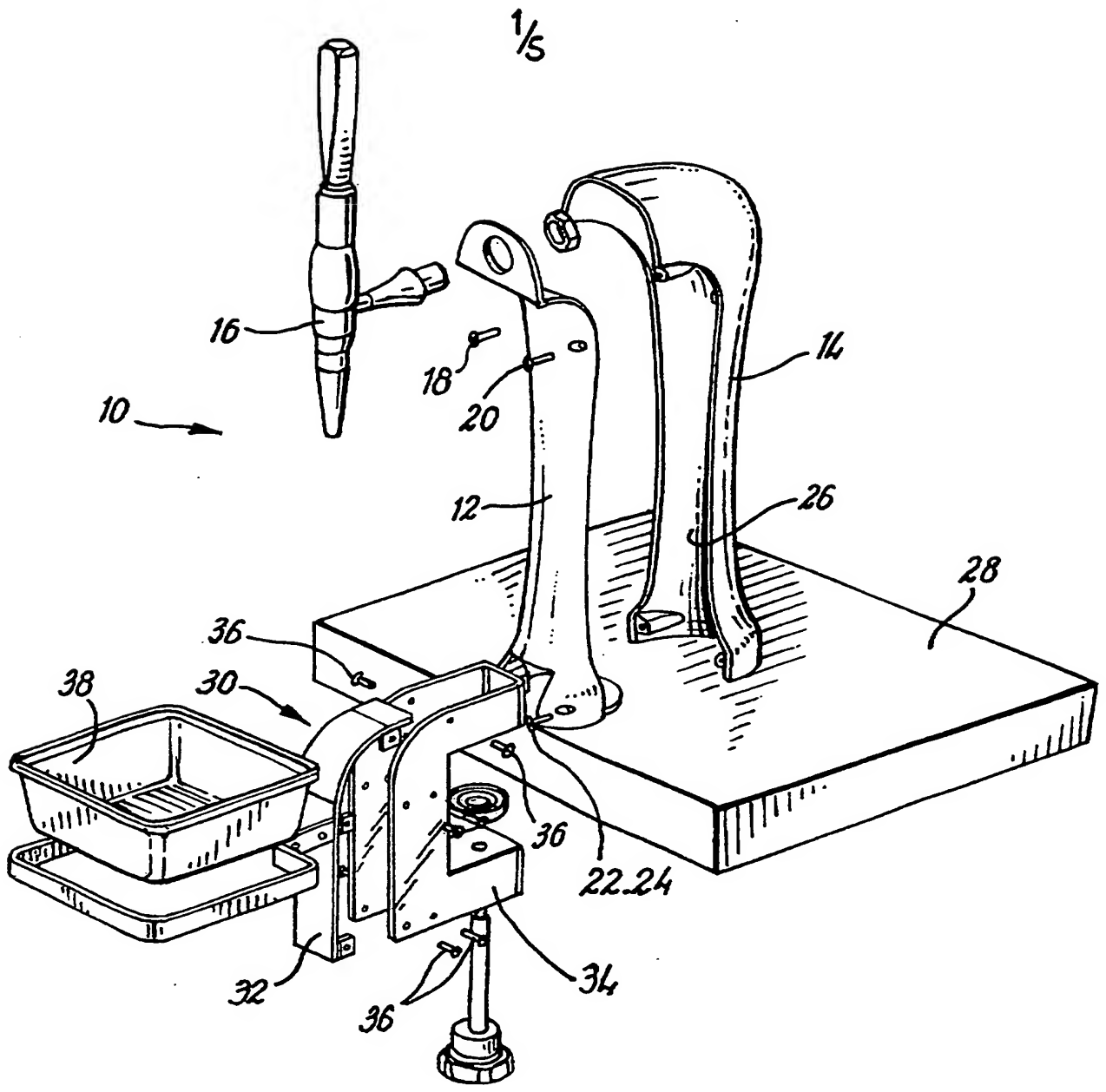


FIG. 1

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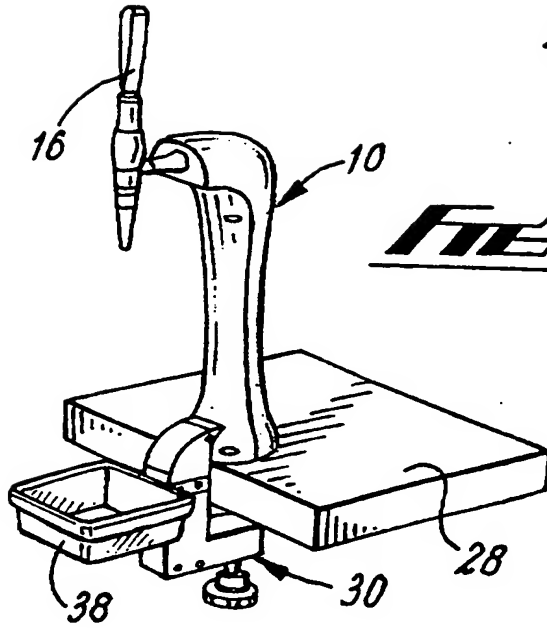


FIG. 2a

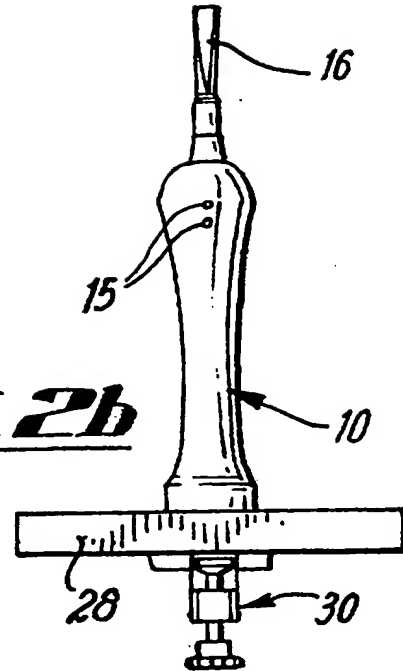


FIG. 2b

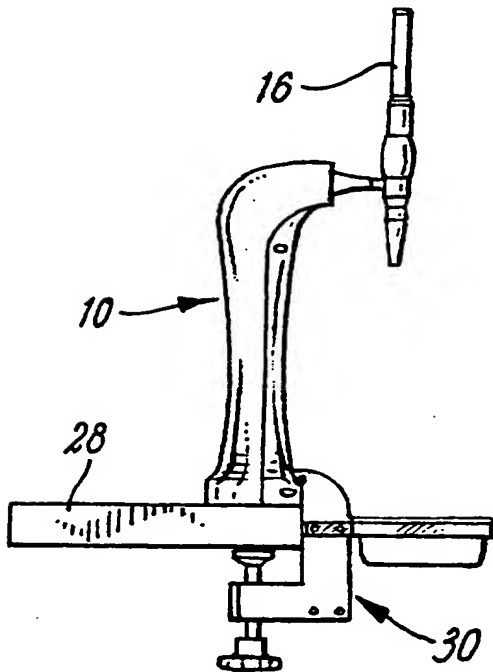


FIG. 2c

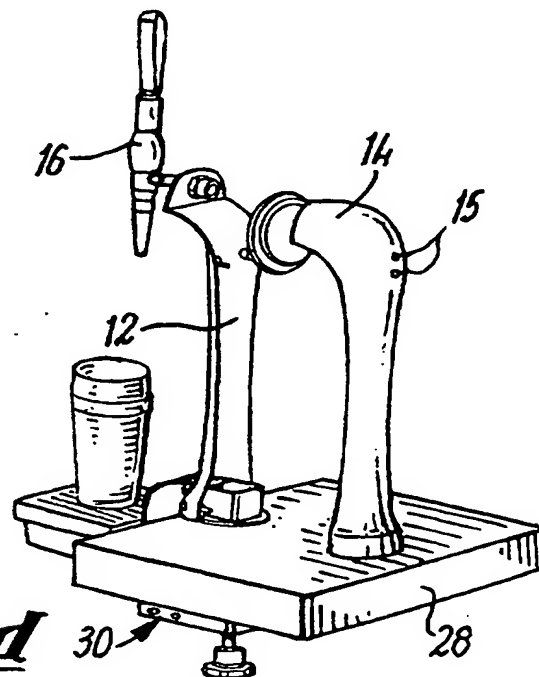


FIG. 2d

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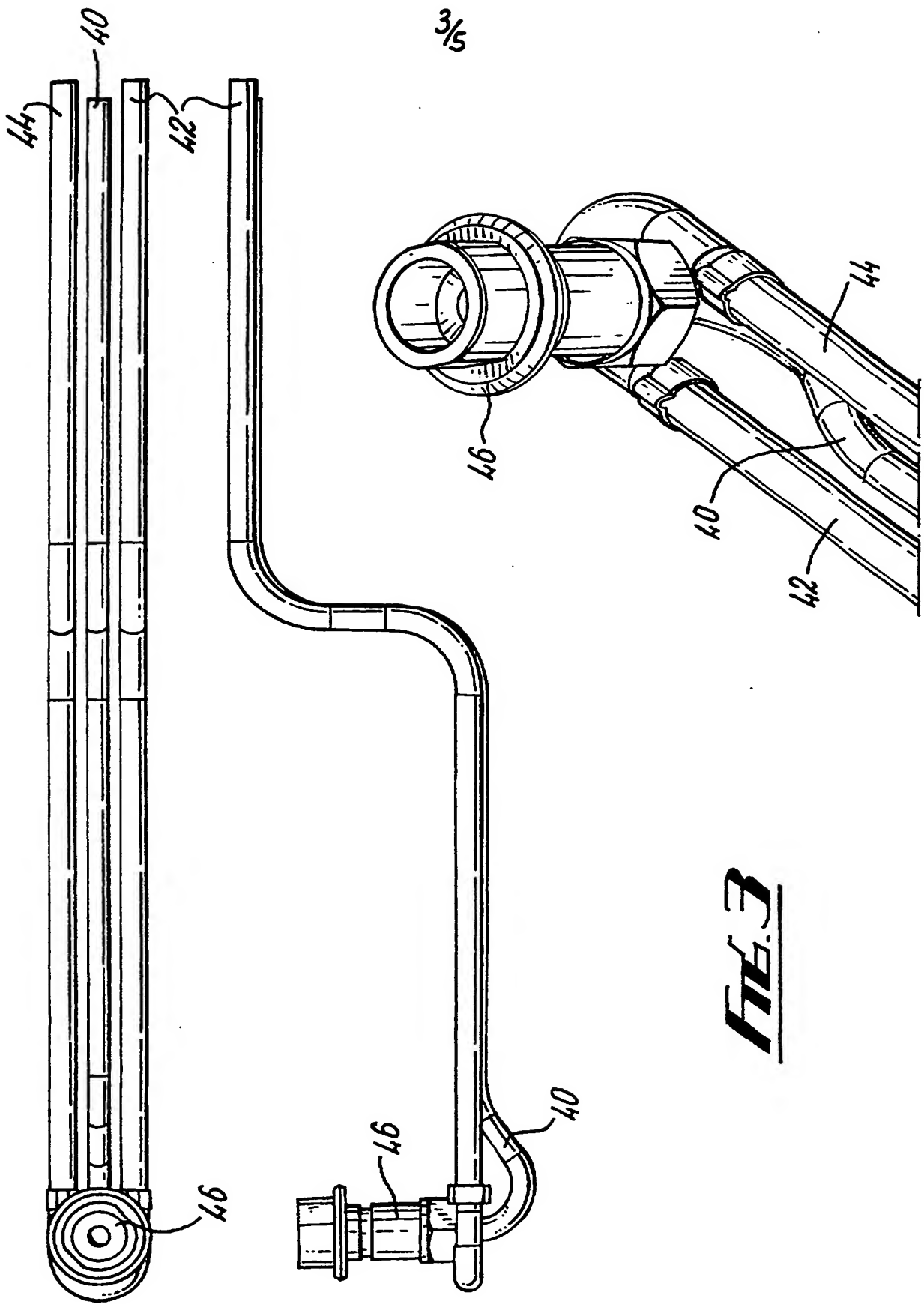


Fig. 3

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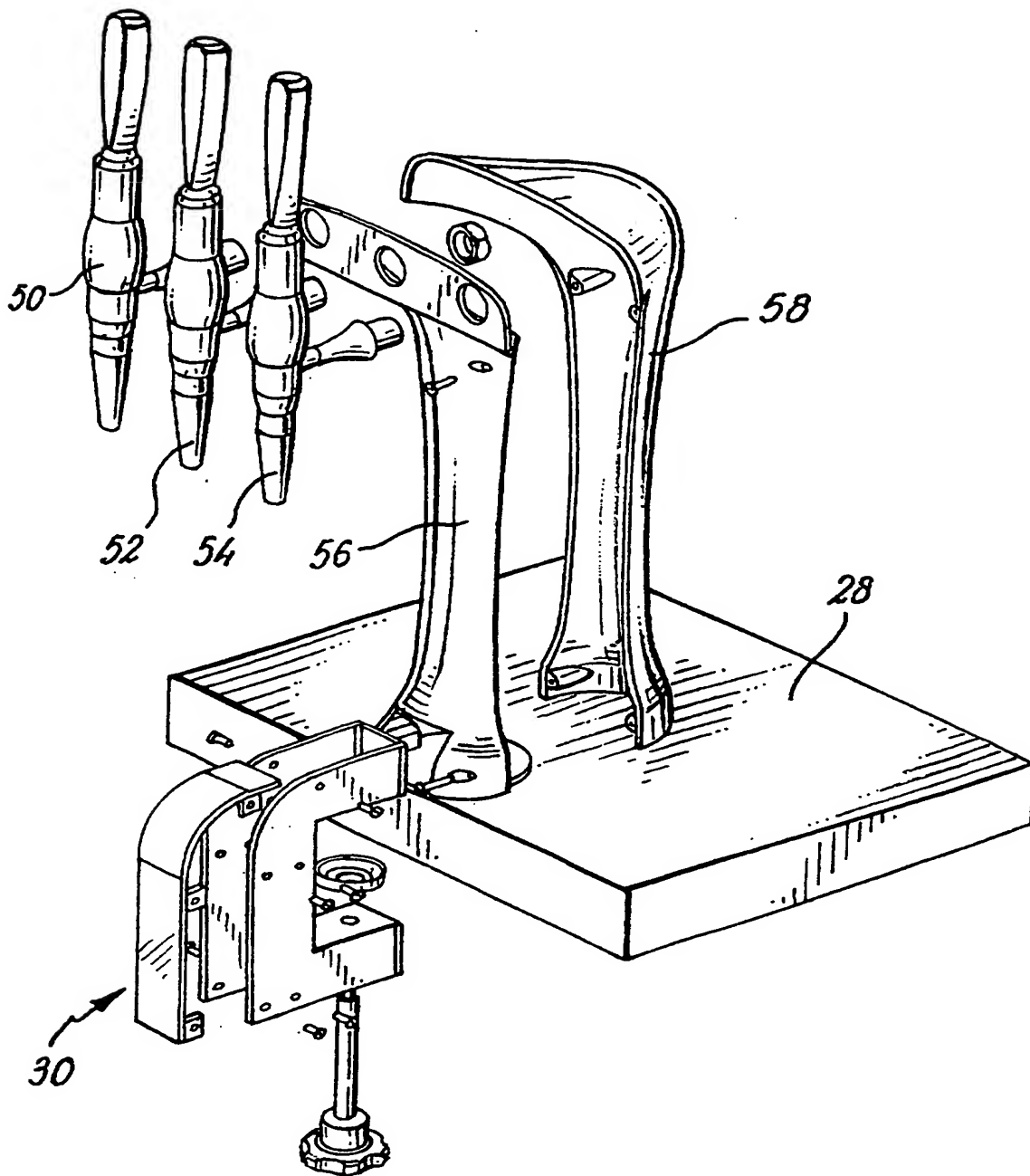


Fig. 4

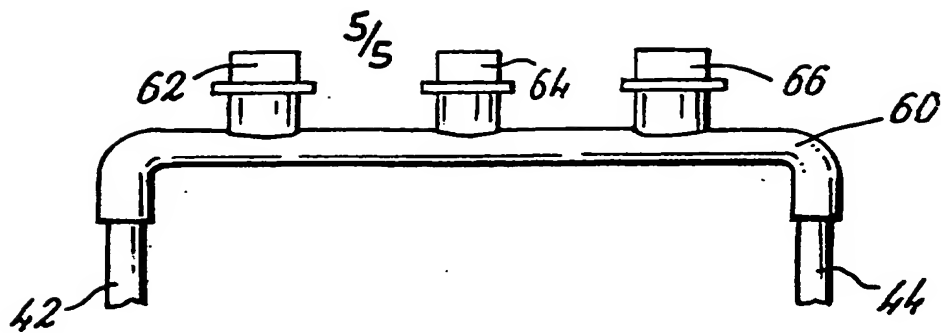


FIG. 5

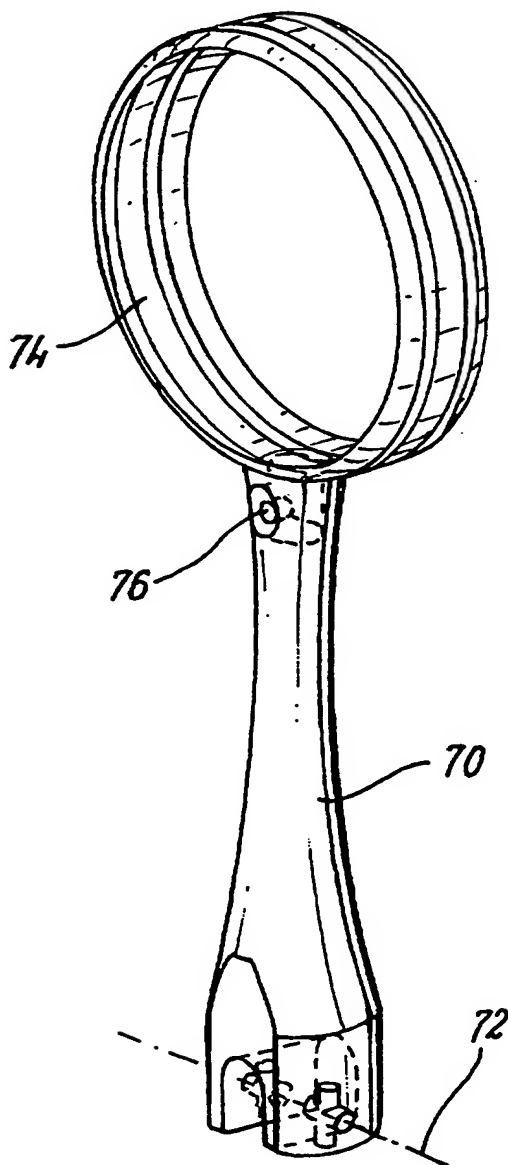


FIG. 6

Apparatus for Serving Alcoholic Beverages

This invention relates to apparatus for serving alcoholic beverages, with particular reference to so-called "brass fonts", and to clamps and serving taps thereof.

Devices which are mounted on bar tops for the serving of alcoholic beverages via taps are well known, and indeed indispensable, features of public houses, bars, restaurants and the like. Such devices conceal tubing which is used to deliver the alcoholic beverage to the tap, from whence it is served.

It is well known to those skilled in the art that such devices can be divided into two general classes: namely, "brass fonts" and "displays", also known as "counter display units" or "CDUs". Brass fonts are typically fabricated from one piece castings in brass or chrome, and are generally quite tall and slim in appearance. Displays are usually shorter and squatter in appearance. However, the primary difference between brass fonts and displays is that displays are intended and adapted for use with a single brand of alcoholic beverage, whereas brass fonts are intended and adapted for use with many different brands and types of alcoholic beverage. Thus, displays can be of a shape which is distinctive of, or associated with, the brand of beverage being served. Also, an integral part of displays is display information or decorations, such as logos, which are indicative of the brand of beverage being served from the display. By "integral" it is meant that the information or decorations are not removable from the display, for example because they are printed onto the display, or comprise an illuminated plastic facia which is integral with, and not detachable from, the display.

In contrast, because brass fonts are intended to be used to serve any number of different alcoholic beverages, it is essential that it is possible to indicate which brand

is currently being served, and, further, that the indication can be removed and replaced with another indication when the brand of beverage being served is changed.

Typically, this is accomplished by way of a rather small badge like portion which is attached to the top of the tap.

Brass fonts can be coupled to more than one tap, so that a single brass font can be used for serving more than one alcoholic beverage. It will be apparent that displays always couple to a single tap, because, as discussed above, displays are dedicated to the serving of a single brand.

There are a number of problems or disadvantages associated with known brass fonts. For example, it is increasingly desirable to deliver cold beer to the tap. It is known to provide cooling of the tubing, which conducts the beverage. However, cooling is not provided over the length of the tubing which extends through the brass font, because the known, monolithic, one piece brass fonts make it difficult or impossible to position cooling means inside the font. Similar considerations mean that insulation of the tubing which conducts the beverage is less than ideal. Additionally, it would be desirable to provide improved display means for displaying information or decorative features indicative of the beverage currently being served.

The present invention overcomes the above mentioned problems and disadvantages.

According to a first aspect of the invention there is provided a brass font for mounting on a bar top, the brass font being adapted to receive at least one tap for serving alcoholic beverages therefrom;

in which the brass font comprises at least two pieces which are coupled so as to define a cavity therebetween through which alcoholic beverages can be delivered to the tap or taps, the coupling between the pieces being detachable so as to permit access to the interior of the brass font.

Preferably, the brass font comprises two pieces.

The provision of two or more pieces which can mate together to form the brass font results in a number of advantages. For example, in contrast to a conventional one piece brass font, the interior of the brass font is very easily accessed for installation, inspection and maintenance purposes. Furthermore, it is possible to interchange display information and decorations very easily. For example, it is possible to provide a plurality of front pieces, each of which advertises a different alcoholic beverage and each of which is attachable to a piece which is permanently mounted on the bar top. Displays which comprise two pieces are known; however, displays are dedicated to a single brand, and therefore there is no motivation to provide a display which can be changed, or "refreshed", when a new alcoholic beverage is used.

The pieces may be castings, which might be chrome or brass castings.

The brass font may comprise beverage conducting tubing through which alcoholic beverages are delivered to the tap. The brass font may further comprise cooling tubing for cooling the beverage conducting tubing by way of a cold fluid conducted through the cooling tubing, in which the cooling tubing extends through brass font substantially up to the point at which the beverage conducting tubing is connected to the tap. This provides cooling of the alcoholic beverage all the way up to the tap, and is a considerable improvement over prior art brass fonts where cooling is not provided in the brass font.

The brass font may comprise an insulator which surrounds the beverage conducting tubing and substantially fills the cavity. Previously, due to the limited access afforded by one piece brass fonts, it has only been possible to provide an insulating sleeve around the tubing. The present invention provides substantially improved insulation which aids the provision of cooled alcoholic beverages. The insulator may be formed in two or more insulating portions which together conform to the cavity. For example, two insulating portions might be provided each of which fits inside a corresponding piece. When positioned together the insulating portions define a central cavity through which the tubing can extend. It might even be possible to simply fill the cavity with an insulating foam.

The insulator may be foam, such as a polyurethane foam.

The brass font may comprise a flow controller for controlling the flow rate at which an alcoholic beverage is delivered to the tap, the flow controller being positioned within the cavity. This is a convenient position for the flow controller which reduces the chances of damage thereto. Additionally, the flow controller may be adjustable only by removing one or more of the pieces. Even if the coupling is detachable by the bar person, this significantly discourages the bar person from tampering with the flow rate, which is a problem because frequently an inappropriate flow rate is set. It is possible to have a coupling which is only detachable by persons such as brewery engineers having, for example, a correct key, in which instance a bar person would be prevented from adjusting the flow rate.

The brass font may comprise detachable mounting means for detachably mounting decorating or display information thereon. A piece may have one or more apertures, the detachable mounting means extending therethrough. Because the interior of the brass font of the present invention is readily accessible, it is possible to secure the

detachable mounting means - for example, a screw thread could be passed through an aperture secured by way of a nut on the inside of the brass font.

The brass font may have illumination means for illuminating at least a portion of the brass font, the brass font having apertures through which electrical wiring is introduced to the interior of the brass font, the electrical wiring providing electrical power to the illumination means. The illumination might comprise a light source disposed in the cavity for backlighting of a translucent facia, or a light source or sources positioned on the extension of the brass font for additional illumination of the front face of the brass font.

The brass font may be adapted to receive at least two taps for serving alcoholic beverages. A preferred, but non-limiting, embodiment is adapted to receive three taps.

Multi-tap embodiments may comprise a manifold on which the taps are mounted, the manifold being in connection with cooling tubing so that cold fluid can be conducted through the manifold.

According to a second aspect of the invention there is provided a kit of parts for assembly into a brass font according to the first aspect of the invention, comprising a mounting piece for mounting on a bar top, and a plurality of other pieces each adapted to be coupled to the mounting piece so as to define a cavity through which alcoholic beverages can be delivered to at least one tap.

According to a third aspect of the invention there is provided a clamp for clamping a brass font to a bar top, the clamp comprising at least two pieces which are coupled so as to define a cavity therebetween through which alcoholic beverages can be

delivered to the brass font, the coupling between the pieces being detachable so as to permit access to the interior of the clamp.

According to a fourth aspect of the invention there is provided a tap for serving alcoholic beverages comprising a handle, which handle comprises a display portion for displaying information or decoration, the display portion being detachably coupled to the remainder of the tap.

According to a fifth aspect of the invention there is provided a kit of parts for assembly into a tap according to the fourth aspect of the invention comprising a tap portion and a plurality of different display portions, the handles each being detachably coupleable to the tap portion.

Embodiments of brass fonts and clamps and taps therefore will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which :-

Figure 1 is an exploded perspective view of a brass font and clamp according to the invention;

Figure 2 shows various views of the brass font of Figure 1;

Figure 3 shows beverage conducting tubing and cooling tubing;

Figure 4 shows a three tap arrangement;

Figure 5 shows a coupling manifold; and

Figure 6 shows a tap handle according to the invention.

Figures 1 and 2 show a brass font (shown generally at 10) according to the invention and comprising two pieces 12, 14 which are coupled so as to define a cavity therebetween through which alcoholic beverages can be delivered to a tap 16, the coupling 18, 20, 22, 24 between the pieces 12, 14 being detachable so as to permit access to the interior of the brass font.

Figures 2a, 2b and 2c depict the brass font in its coupled state. Coupling 18, 20, 22, 24 comprises screws which locate in suitable threaded receptacles. However, any suitable coupling mechanism can be employed. A quick release system is a possibility.

From Figure 1 it will be appreciated that, when pieces 12, 14 are coupled, a cavity will be formed through which beverage conducting tubing (not shown) can extend. The portion of this cavity which is defined by piece 14 is shown generally at 26.

The pieces 12, 14 can be castings, for example in chrome or brass, although other materials, such as plastics, might usefully be employed.

Apertures 15 - the piece 14 permit the attachment of signs and the like to the front of the brass font to denote the alcoholic beverage currently being served.

The bar font 10 is mounted on a bar top 28 by means of a clamp 30. A drip tray 38 is attached to the clamp 30. An alternative way of mounting the brass font is "through the bar", i.e., a portion of the brass font passes through an aperture in the bar top, and is secured on the bottom of the bar top. This is also within the scope of the invention.

The clamp 30 comprises two pieces 32, 34 which are coupled so as to define a cavity therebetween through which the beverage conducting tubing can extend. The coupling is detachable so as to permit access to the interior of the clamp. In the present embodiment, the coupling comprises screws 36, but other suitable means can be employed.

It has been found that by permitting the beverage conducting tubing to pass through the clamp 30, the installation and positioning of the tubing is rendered a far easier task. Prior art clamps tend to obstruct the tubing, in contrast, the present invention actually facilitates its installation.

Figure 3 shows beverage conducting tubing 40. The alcoholic beverage flowing through tubing 40 is cooled by means of cooling tubing 42, 44 which has a cold fluid pumped therethrough. A coupling manifold 46 is used to couple the beverage tubing 40 to the tap 16, and to allow the cold fluid to cool the beverage even in the immediate vicinity of the tap. It has not been possible to introduce cooling tubing into prior art, one piece brass fonts because of the difficulty of accessing the interior of such articles.

Figure 4 shows a multiple tap embodiment in which three taps 50, 52, 54 are connected to pieces 56, 58.

Figure 5 shows a coupling manifold 60 which is a variant on the coupling manifold of Figure 3. Three coupling parts 62, 64, 66 are provided to couple to the taps 50, 52, 54.

Figure 6 shows a tap handle 70. In use, the handle 70 pivots around the axis 72 to enable an alcoholic beverage to pour from an outlet (not shown). The handle 70

comprises a display portion 74, the display portion 72 being detachably coupled to the remainder of the tap by means of a screw (not shown) which threads into a threaded receptacle 76. Other suitable coupling means can be employed. The display portion 72 can display, for example, a brand logo and/or the brand name corresponding to the beverage currently being served. A number of display portions can be provided, and the relevant display portion can be installed onto the tap whenever the beverage being served through the tap is changed.

In a similar manner, the "front" piece 14 which faces customers can display information, logos etc. The front piece 14 might comprise a translucent screen which is illuminated from within the brass font. A number of front pieces having different display information can be provided, each of which can couple with a mounting piece which remains mounted on the bar top. The correct front piece can then be installed whenever the beverage being served is changed.

CLAIMS

1. A brass font for mounting on a bar top, the brass font being adapted to receive at least one tap for serving alcoholic beverages therefrom;

in which the brass font comprises at least two pieces which are coupled so as to define a cavity therebetween through which alcoholic beverages can be delivered to the tap or taps, the coupling between the pieces being detachable so as to permit access to the interior of the brass font.
2. A brass font according to claim 1 comprising two pieces.
3. A brass font according to claim 1 or claim 2 in which the pieces are castings.
4. A brass font according to claim 3 in which the castings are chrome castings.
5. A brass font according to claim 3 in which the castings are brass castings.
6. A brass font according to any previous claim comprising beverage conducting tubing through which alcoholic beverages are delivered to the tap.
7. A brass font according to claim 6 further comprising cooling tubing for cooling the beverage conducting tubing by way of a cold fluid conducted through the cooling tubing, in which the cooling tubing extends through brass font substantially up to the point at which the beverage conducting tubing is connected to the tap.

8. A brass font according to claim 6 or claim 7 comprising an insulator which surrounds the beverage conducting tubing and substantially fills the cavity.
9. A brass font according to claim 8 in which the insulator is a foam.
10. A brass font according to any previous claim comprising a flow controller for controlling the flow rate at which an alcoholic beverage is delivered to the tap, the flow controller being positioned within the cavity.
11. A brass font according to any previous claim comprising detachable mounting means for detachably mounting decorating or display information thereon.
12. A brass font according any previous claim having illumination means for illuminating at least a portion of the brass font, the brass font having apertures through which electrical wiring is introduced to the interior of the brass font, the electrical wiring providing electrical power to the illumination means.
13. A brass font according to any previous claim adapted to receive at least two taps for serving alcoholic beverages.
14. A brass font according to claim 13 adapted to receive three taps.
15. A brass font according to claim 13 or claim 14 comprising a manifold on which the taps are mounted, the manifold being in connection with cooling tubing so that cold fluid can be conducted through the manifold.
16. A kit of parts for assembly into a brass font according to any of claims 1 to 15, comprising a mounting piece for mounting on a bar top, and a plurality of other

pieces each adapted to be coupled to the mounting piece so as to define a cavity through which alcoholic beverages can be delivered to at least one tap.

17. A clamp for clamping a brass font to a bar top, the clamp comprising at least two pieces which are coupled so as to define a cavity therebetween through which alcoholic beverages can be delivered to the brass font, the coupling between the pieces being detachable so as to permit access to the interior of the clamp.

18. A tap for serving alcoholic beverages comprising a handle, which handle comprises a display portion for displaying information or decoration, the display portion being detachably coupled to the remainder of the tap.

19. A kit of parts for assembly into a tap according to claim 18 comprising a tap portion and a plurality of different display portions, the handles each being detachably coupleable to the tap portion.